Education Reform in British Columbia:

Building a Sustainable School System

CABINET REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2000 EDUCATION CHANGES

Hon. Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Education

September 1991

• MINISTRY OF EDUCATION •

Province of
British Columbia

92-00544/

Province of British Columbia

NEWS RELEASE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
NR36-91

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 6, 1991

Cabinet completes review of Year 2000 Program for education reform in British Columbia

Vancouver — Education Minister Stan Hagen today announced the results of a Cabinet review of the Year 2000 Program for education reform in British Columbia.

"The government is firmly committed to supporting the education reforms vital to preparing children for the Year 2000," said Hagen.

"The government will be supporting education reform by broadening the consultation process, furthering the partnership between business and education, and ensuring a clear focus on standards, accountability and the pursuit of excellence."

Premier Rita Johnston said: "Education continues to be a major priority of the government. The need to keep up with the changing demands of society is clear. Students in British Columbia have shown they can compete with, and do as well as or better than students anywhere in the world.

"It is up to us to ensure that the education system provides direction and support required for B.C. students to continue to excel."

Hagen said the government will ensure that clear, consistent and meaningful standards for educational achievements are established and that parents and the communities are kept aware of how well their students are doing in relation to these standards. He said the use of letter grades will be retained in the upper intermediate and graduation years and will be supplemented with other forms of assessment information being developed.

"I will also be establishing a Provincial Education Standards Board to provide an ongoing focus on standards, accountability and excellence," said Hagen.

"Further, as Minister of Education and as the chairperson of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, I will continue to give my full support to the national School Achievement Indicators Program," he added.

Hagen said that in order to ensure that parents and the community are aware of the effectiveness of education programs in their districts, the government will be taking steps to prescribe the reporting of educational progress by school boards.

(more)

"We will be requiring school districts to publish prescribed information in their annual reports. District reports will compare local results in relation to provincial indicators as a further measure of accountability."

Hagen said the government will ensure that the broadest possible social and economic perspective is reflected in the new Intermediate and Graduation programs by establishing a special External Advisory Committee on Education Reform, chaired by Mr. Edgar F. Kaiser Jr. One of the key tasks of the advisory committee will be to review the structure of the Intermediate and Graduation programs.

Hagen said that as a result of these initiatives around consultation, standards, and accountability, the Intermediate Program and the Graduation Program would also be given more development time before implementation.

"We are responding to calls from teachers, universities and parents for more time before the new programs are implemented. As a result I will be extending the implementation timelines by one year. In addition I will be expanding the intermediate and graduation development teams to include greater representation from universities and colleges, and business and industry. The expanded teams will be considering many innovative programs such as the pre-apprenticeship program called 2+2. This program would allow students in grades 11 and 12 to take apprenticeship training which will be recognized in post-secondary institutions."

"I am confident that with the enhanced consultation process and our focus on students and accountability, the Intermediate and Graduation programs will engender the same wide acceptance and support that the Primary Program, now being implemented in all public schools in B.C., is receiving."

-30-

For further information contact:

Gerald Morton
Acting Director
Communications Branch
Ministry of Education
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 2M4

Telephone: 356-2500

Sam Lim
Executive Director
Communications and Strategic Planning
Ministry of Education
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 2M4

356-2481

EDUCATION REFORM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2000

Increased focus on standards and excellence

- Provincial Education Standards Board will be established.
- Province will continue to take part in national and international assessments of educational progress.
- Provincial indicators will be developed which will involve a wide range of testing and assessments, including evaluations from graduating students, employers and post-secondary institutions.
- Letter grades will be retained in upper Intermediate and Graduation years.
- Province will continue to fully support the national School Achievement Indicators Program.

More accountability

- Government will prescribe specific information about student performance to be included in annual reports of school boards.
- District reports will compare local results in relation to provincial indicators.
- Ministry of Education Annual Report will report on over-all system progress based on provincial indicators.

Broadened consultation

- Special External Advisory Committee on Education Reform established to ensure the broadest possible social and economic perspective is considered in the implementation of education reform in B.C.
- The committee will consist of representatives of the post-secondary education and business communities as well as parents, students and the general public.
- The committee will be chaired by Mr. Edgar F. Kaiser Jr. Mr. Kaiser is currently Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Kaiser Resources Ltd. In the past he has been Chairman and C.E.O. of the Bank of B.C. and of Kaiser Steel Corporation. In addition he has served as a special assistant to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as well assistant to the President of the United States of America. Mr. Kaiser brings with him a wealth of experience in a number of community organizations including the Kaiser Substance Abuse Foundation, the Boys' & Girls' Club, the Council for Excellence in Government, the Salk Institute, the Vancouver Aquarium and the Vancouver General Hospital.
- The committee will report the results of their deliberations to the Education Advisory Council and to the Minister of Education.
- Committee tasks include the review of the structure of the Intermediate and Graduation programs.

EDUCATION REFORM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

BACKGROUND TO EDUCATION CHANGE

A Firm Foundation

For decades, British Columbia has had an education system to be proud of. Former students have made their marks on the world, in business and education and politics. They have built a strong province with a strong economy, and created a society which is the envy of many.

In the future it will take more than hard work and dedication to sustain our way of life. Our workers can no longer simply build on the natural abundance of British Columbia's resources; our business community can no longer develop only domestic strengths; our most highly educated citizens must go beyond the needs of this most western province of Canada. Our trade is now diversified, our culture is broad-based, our society is global.

There is also a greater sense of competition with students from academically advanced countries such as Japan, Germany and Korea. To stay competitive B.C. students must keep abreast of science, technology and information processing.

The education system that sustained growth in this province, that gave us the ability to develop our resources and build our fine cities, must reflect these new realities. The skills, abilities, and excellence of the past, while a source of pride, will not be sufficient in the future.

Moving Towards Reform

When government asked the people in 1980 what was needed in education, the answer, given in *The Apple Report*, was clear. Education needed a new mandate — a new focus and direction. When this was explored further, in the 1985 review of education, *Let's Talk About Schools*, people were even more specific. Education needed to focus not just on the intellectual development of our children, but on their social, human and vocational development as well.

This vision for our children's future found further expression in the findings of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education established by government in 1987. Those findings, released in 1988, took the form of 83 specific recommendations covering all aspects of education in our province.

(over)

A Mandate for Reform

Government responded fully and quickly, not only adopting 78 of the 83 recommendations but also providing the educational, legislative and financial means of bringing about these reforms. In January, 1989, government issued *Policy Directions*, defining a mandate for education, outlining a set of goals and directions, and providing $1.4 billion in targetted funding to be used over a 10-year period of implementation. Later in the same year, the *School Act* and *Independent School Act* created enabling legislation under which reform could take place. And in the Fall of 1989, the educational basis for curriculum reform was presented in the draft response document, *Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future*, later issued as *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning*. In the space of 10 months, government committed itself to providing the leadership for education reform in British Columbia through an extensive consultative and collaborative process which has involved thousands of educators and interested parties over the past three years.

EDUCATION REFORM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

EDUCATION TODAY

Achieving Excellence

We have much to be proud of as we begin the 1991/92 school year. For example, our students continue to do well in national and international competitions. In the 1988 International Math and Science Assessment, our students came first and third in science and math. In 1990, in the national Euclid math competition, 47 of the top 100 scores were earned by young British Columbians. Of the top 50 schools, more than half were located in B.C. Preliminary information suggests that our students did even better in 1991.

Results of the most recent international assessment of math, science, and geography are promising and should be available this fall.

In addition, more and more students are participating in the provincial scholarship examinations. More students are receiving scholarships as well, now that they write towards an established standard of excellence. This year over 2000 students won scholarships, as compared to 1,310 a year ago. Previously, scholarships were awarded to only the top three per cent of participants.

Broadening the Base of Excellence

But if we have reason to be proud, we must remember that despite our successes our education system must continue to respond to new challenges. Our current school completion rate, for example, can be improved, as can the services we provide for many culturally, mentally or physically disadvantaged.

Concerns such as these formed part of the basis for decisions about the education reforms being introduced in British Columbia.

The Primary Program - the first step

The Primary Program, being introduced in all schools this September, is a major step in improving education for every student. Focussing on enhancing success and supporting active participation in learning for each child, the Primary Program establishes an environment where students are challenged to meet their individual potential, and where they will develop positive attitudes, confidence and a desire for learning that will last a lifetime.

EDUCATION REFORM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Supporting Reform

The government continues its commitment to education reform.

In the spirit first established in *Policy Directions* and *A Mandate for the School System*, government remains responsive to the needs and concerns voiced by the people of British Columbia. In its concern for the education of all of B.C.'s young people, it continues to support the development of new education programs.

In 1989 government committed $1.4 billion in funds, to be spread over 10 years, for implementation of new programs. Since that time the government's commitment to education reform has been vigorously demonstrated: in 1989/90, $47 million was targetted for Royal Commission programs; in 1990/91, $250 million was available for Royal Commission initiatives.

This year, $185 million in targetted funds is available for the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations and Year 2000 projects. As well, there are funds made available through the Block Funding System that can be used at the discretion of the school districts to implement initiatives stemming from the Sullivan Royal Commission.

In 1991/92, a major government commitment of $650 million was made for school construction and upgrading to meet the need for new classroom spaces for our students and teachers. The $650 million is unprecedented in the history of the province, and further underscores the importance of education to our province's future.

Supporting Teachers

Government recognizes the important contribution teachers make to giving our students the best possible education, and appreciates their dedication and professionalism.

Since 1989, the Ministry of Education has supported a province-wide series of workshops and summer institutes designed to introduce thousands of B.C. teachers to the new program directions. These have been well-attended, and have encouraged the development of district and regional implementation networks.

Government has also invited B.C. universities, colleges and school districts to apply for funding to develop teacher education programs using satellite campuses in rural and remote areas. These would support both new teachers

(over)

and those who wish to retrain or upgrade their qualifications, and would make new teaching methods available to teachers.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education is providing financial incentives to graduating teachers to locate in rural or remote areas of the province through the Forgivable Loan Program.

Government has also provided substantial funds to expand teacher education. In the 1990/91 school year alone, $9.3 million has helped to increase the number of places for education training from under 700 to over 1,200.

Government recognizes that teachers should receive a fair and equitable wage: the average total remuneration, including benefits, is over $51,000. At the same time, the average class size across the province has been steadily reduced, to 23 in elementary schools and 24 in secondary, allowing teachers to give more individual attention to students.

The Ministry has also created annual Teaching Excellence Awards. These awards are designed to encourage and promote innovative teaching practices and to enhance the profile of teaching. Teachers in the public school system and independent schools are eligible for nomination by colleagues or members of the public.

Financial Support

This year alone, government will provide $3.2 billion to run the Primary to Grade 12 system. This represents 20 per cent of the provincial budget, second only to spending on health. This $3.2 billion covers teacher compensation (67%), school and district administration (12%), operations and maintenance (13%), student transportation (3%) and instructional supplies (5%).

Over the last three years, government has committed $1.25 billion for school construction and upgrading. In 1991/92, the government has allotted $650 million for capital expenditures, more than double the capital funding for the last two years combined. These funds will help build new schools, upgrade existing schools to earthquake standards, renovate and expand existing facilities, and make schools more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Clearly, government is more than maintaining its financial commitment to education. Even in 1991/92, a time of reduced growth of revenue, it has increased funding by more than eight per cent. Its aim is to balance financial support for education with the need to restrict the tax burden on our citizens to acceptable levels. In addition, a focus on achieving quality results and giving good value for the substantial investment being made in education will ensure ongoing public support for the education system. Only in this way will the government be able to sustain the school system and the needed education reforms.

EDUCATION REFORM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE FUTURE

In January of 1989, government made a commitment to support education reform. Since then, it has given direction and emphasis to the concept of a new approach to education. Just as significantly, it has given continued financial support—several hundred million dollars—for the introduction of new educational programs. This support has included training and preparation for teachers, the development of new programs, and grants provided directly to schools.

Over the past summer, the Minister of Education and the government of British Columbia have reviewed the Year 2000 changes and the Intermediate and Graduation programs, and have reaffirmed their support for education reform.

The Government is aware that if the education reform process is to succeed, it must enjoy widespread support both within and outside the education community.

The emphasis on the broadest possible consultation, high standards, and enhanced accountability will provide the basis for effective education reform to prepare the young people of British Columbia for a successful and confident future.